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Soviet Vice Consul Believed to Be Spy Defects to Britain

LONDON, Oct. 23 (UPI)—British intelligence agents interviewed a Soviet diplomat today who defected while in Iran. The man reportedly is a major spy in the KGB.

The Home Office said Vladimir Andreyovich Kuzichkin, 35, a vice consul in the Soviet Embassy in Tehran, requested and was given permission to live in Britain, although he was not granted official political asylum.

"This is not a run-of-the-mill defection. He is quite a big fish, and this is an important catch," said a government source, who added that Kuzichkin's official post evidently was a cover for his KGB role.

British government sources said Kuzichkin was being interviewed at a secret location by the British Intelligence Service and was regarded as an important new source for details on the Soviet spy system.

When, where and how Kuzichkin entered Britain—beyond the fact that it was without his wife—as well as other details of his decision to become a defector, were kept secret. The Foreign Office declined comment on a report that he went underground five months ago when his automobile was found abandoned on a Tehran street.

The Foreign Office also would not comment on reports that Kuzichkin brought with him a "vast dossier" that could expose dozens of KGB agents in Western Europe and the Middle East and break KGB codes.

Another unconfirmed report, in the Manchester Guardian, said Kuzichkin's real job in Tehran was to maintain contact with Iran's outlawed communist Tudeh Party.

In Washington, the CIA declined comment on reports that U.S. intelligence agents were debriefing Kuzichkin.

British officials said the Soviet Embassy in London was informed of the defection and had requested consular access to Kuzichkin. Officials said that the request was relayed to Kuzichkin, but that he had not replied.